

**STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATION FORUM AND CAPACITY-BUILDING
WORKSHOP ON UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA.**

**ORGANIZERS: USPF(UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROVISION FUND)
GBF (GROWING BUSINESSES FOUNDATION)**

VENUE: PREMIER HOTEL, IBADAN

DATE: FEBRUARY 18 AND 19, 2010

DAY 1

Registration of participants began after 9:00a.m, and the programme commenced at around 10:11a.m after apologies for the delay by the compare, Mr Yanju Adegbite. There was also summarization of proceedings in Yoruba, by Mr Feranmi Babalola, from time to time as the programme continued.

Mr Adegbite then introduced the following persons:-

- (a) Mr Bashir Patel - Director of Programmes, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO)
- (b) Chief Makinde - Former Managing Director of Nigerian Breweries, and USPF board member representing the minister of state for communications
- (c) Mr Funso Fayomi - Director and Secretary USPF
- (d) Dr Ndidi Edozien - President/Founder Growing Businesses

Foundation (G.B.F)

(She arrived later)

- (e) Mr Bayo Ojo - Zonal Controller, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC)
- (f) Mr Adedigba - Head of Strategy, USPF
- (g) Engr Wakil - head of ICT Projects, USPF
- (h) Engr. Asaju - Head of Infrastructure Projects, USPF
- (i) Alhaji Aderounmu- President, Cooperative Federation, South West Zone

After opening prayers, and singing of the national anthem, the address of the minister of state for communications was read on his behalf by Chief Makinde.

MINISTER'S ADDRESS

The address spoke on the relevance of ICT in daily life. It spoke on the need to harvest opportunities in the new information age, the importance of becoming computer literate, the need for connectivity and job creation through ICT, and of the objective to provide all Nigerians with ICT access. It also spoke on ICT as a driver of agriculture, health, commerce and education, and said the current low utilization of ICT in the rural sector can be reversed. The address pointed out connectivity's advantage to VISION

2020 and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and that USPF wants to achieve total access. He pointed out that the first consultative forum was being held in the South West, and that USPF project implementation is geared towards projects specific to certain identified locations. Mr Fayomi said USPF would like feedback from stakeholders after the programme, wanting to know their specific requirements. He spoke of the need to increase the capacities of communities, and of the invitation of Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (C.T.O) to share information on best practices.

PRESENTATION OF MANDATE AND STRATEGIC PLAN OF USPF (2007-2011).

Mr Fayomi of U.S.P.F introduced the Universal Services Fund (USF) as a global body with member countries signatory to an ITU agreement to set aside funds to provide access to technology to their citizens. In each country it is the organ of government charged with the responsibility of providing universal access to ICT.

He then spoke on the structure of USPF as consisting of the board, the secretariat, and the fund manager. He identified the 5 broad goals of USPF's strategic plan as:-

- (i) To facilitate an enabling environment through public-private partnership.

- (ii) To promote universal access to ICT and service.
- (iii) To promote universal coverage.
- (iv) To ensure connectivity for development.
- (v) To achieve institutional development

He spoke further on USPF's mandate to:-

- (i) Create an enabling environment.
- (ii) Contribute to national economic and social development.
- (iii) Facilitate provision of infrastructural development in unserved areas.
- (iv) Promote competition in ICT services delivery.
- (v) Promotion technological innovation in ICT services delivery.

Mr Fayomi mentioned USPF's practical ICT initiatives to educational institutions in Nigeria, pointing out USPF's provision of ICT equipment to some secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. He then spoke briefly on USPF's provision of funds for access to telecommunications and I.T pointing out that everyone should have the opportunity to benefit from the information society.

U.S.P.F initiatives include:-

- (a) School Access Programme.
- (b) Community Communication Centres.
- (c) Accelerated Mobile Phone Expansion (AMPE) projects.

He pointed out that projects could be implemented as TOP-DOWN, i.e conceived officially and implemented to end users/beneficiaries, or BOTTOM-UP, i.e conceived by potential beneficiaries and implemented through proposals to USPF.

Mr Fayomi then spoke on USPF financing criteria and eligibility saying:-

- (a) ICT- related projects should be located in underserved or unserved areas.
- (b) There should be coordination for synergy, e.g assisting state governments in funding: There is the need to continue to use the energy and creativity of Nigerians through ICT.
- (c) There should be protection of ICT infrastructure and equipment. He related previous problems encountered with theft and vandalism.

He said ICT could be deployed in educational institutions, and people living around could also be allowed to use it.

The compere, Mr Elvin Jarrett, indicated that 3 people would give goodwill messages to the forum:-

(A) Mr Bashir Patel (Director of Programmes, CTO)

In his message, Mr Patel pointed out that:-

- We are never too old to learn in relation to ICT
- It is necessary to continue to exchange information.

- The CTO is a 109 year-old organization that provides the international community with effective means to help bridge the digital divide and achieve socio-economic development.
- There is less than 1% access to ICT in Africa compared with 50% in U.S.A.
- Solutions exist in respect of connectivity, access and content
- Progress can be made towards attaining MDGs by bridging the digital divide.

He then introduced COMARCI (Commonwealth African Rural Community Initiative), saying it works with governments to achieve targets in respect of technology, funding, and sustainability. It identifies the gaps (constraints and challenges) in 18 African commonwealth countries, and maps current state of connectivity.

Mr Bashir Patel then raised 2 questions, i.e 'How do you want your community to improve?' and 'How do you make communities computer-literate?'. He spoke of the Happy Village Programme in India where women in rural India were trained in using the internet, and have become economically empowered, generating income from data-entry, online. He said the criterion for successful projects is that sustainability must be ensured in respect of finance, connectivity, access and content.

(B) Alhaji Ismail Aderounmu (President, Nigerian Cooperative Federation, South West Zone)

Spoke next, and urged the audiences to listen to the speakers from beginning to the end, and to always behave in a civilized manner, considering that the South West was the first geo-political zone to benefit from this programme.

(C) Dr. Ndidi Edozien (Founder, Growing Businesses Foundation) spoke on the importance of:-

- Reaching out of as many people as possible.
- Ensuring ownership of ICT infrastructure and preventing vandalism.
- Access to ICT and access through ICT.

SETTING OBJECTIVES FOR STAKEHOLDERS FORUM AND CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP

This presentation was made by Mr Adedigba of USPF. After a brief introduction of USPF, he spoke on:-

- Creating awareness of USPF
- Involving all the stakeholders towards ICT access.
- Ensuring that everyone is involved in building capacity.
- Determination of what ICTs are needed at community level.
- Education, partnership and ownership of ICT projects.

He also said there should be continuous feedback to USPF.

CURRENT USPF PROJECTS

The presentation was made by Engr Wakil of USPF. He spoke on USPF projects, SAP (School Access Programme) and TIAP (Tertiary Institution Access Programme). The objectives of TIAP and SAP are:-

- To provide access to the internet.
- To extend ICT penetration.
- To create digital awareness.
- To create a digital lifestyle.

Engr Wakil then gave details of SAP and TIAP projects:-

SAP

2007 – 73 schools (pilot, completed)

2008 – 365 schools (ongoing, 75% completed)

2009 – 327 schools (proposed)

68 tertiary institutions have benefited from TIAP (Implementation is ongoing), while 60 more were proposed in 2009.

SAP deliverables:- P.Cs, Servers, Laptops, Printers, Generators, VSAT equipment, Wireless connectivity, Cost of bandwidth for one year, One-year maintenance agreement.

He identified challenges faced in respect of security, bandwidth, training, management, power supply and payment renewal.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROJECTS

Engr Asaju of USPF made this presentation. He spoke on:-

1. Community Communication Centres Project (CCC) with features such as internet access, and voice telephony, and gave locations in the South West such as Apete and Akinmorin where such centres exist.
2. Base Transceiver Site Project (BTS) projects ongoing in the South West.
3. Co-location Infrastructure Project (CIP) involves provision of shareable telecommunications infrastructure.
4. Rural Broadband Internet Access (RUBI)
5. Backbone Transmission Infrastructure Project.

There was a break for tea after Engr. Asaju's presentation.

After the tea-break, there was a question-and-answer /comments session moderated by Mr Emeka Orji, (Managing Director, Growing Businesses Foundation)

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

- What can USPF do to enhance cooperation of cooperative societies in the South West, in relation to acquisition of computers, bandwidth, e.tc?
- Organizers of the forum can visit NASSI (National Association of Small-Scale Industrialists) to enlighten its members.
- How can training for trainers be organized?
- How does USPF funding work?

- Is vandalism of ICT equipment politically motivated?
- Are there USPF projects in Lagos state?
- Is USPF involved with software, and not just hardware?
- What provision exists for physically challenged persons?
- Is there any provision for private schools to be assisted by USPF?
- How can Ogun state benefit?
- Information on partnering with U.S.P.F required.
- What sort of matching funds are needed for partnership?
- What mechanism exists for monitoring and evaluation of projects?

Dr Edozien observed that the questions were intelligent and all-encompassing, and spoke of public-private partnership seeking to empower people.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS/COMMENTS.

- There are USPF projects sited in Lagos State.
- Software development is possible. USPF is interested, and has Technology Incubation Centres.
- USPF has projects all over Nigeria.
- Certain projects cannot be distributed evenly, e.g B.T.S
- Subsidies are given to service providers to go to areas they wouldn't ordinarily go to.

- Ownership of ICT projects: A suggestion is to involve Local Government Chairmen in order to provide protection.
- Establishment of cybercafés in rural centres-to support unserved and underserved areas.
- Provision exists for disabled persons by USPF. It has a unit dealing with this and consultancy.
- Mandatory Insurance Policy to ensure sustainability.
- SAP and TIAP have been uniformly implemented across the nation. There is reliance on the states to select benefiting schools.
- SAP is limited to public schools for now because private schools are better off financially.
- Eligibility for projects:- you can write proposals to USPF
- Cooperative societies should educate their members.

Mr Patel of CTO proceeded to tell the audience that 8million people were trained in ICT in kerala State of India within some months, with 1 person, for every household, trained by receiving 15 hours of tutorials in community centres. He cited the 'happy women' trained in rural India, then identified the problems of rural areas as illiteracy, no jobs, low income per capita, immigration to urban areas, irregular power supply, poor healthcare, medical services.

He reiterated the importance of connectivity, access, content and applications e.g financial and health services, and spoke of an ICT model made up of National Platforms and Content, Services, Connectivity and Access.

FURTHER QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/STATEMENT OF NEEDS

- How do you include persons with disabilities in the programmes? They need special support, e.g relating to language, sight and mobility.
- Need for computer training and computers.
- Connectivity challenge in Komu, Oyo state: Komu is a border town with no G.S.M coverage.
- Need for ICT centre in Ijesha land.

RESPONSE

1. Etisalat representative pledged that his company would soon extend coverage to Komu.

Lunch followed after the session of questions and answers.

RURAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK.

Mr Patel of CTO made this presentation. He said rural ICT applications take into account factors such as connectivity, the disabled and gender. He gave examples applications in rural India:-

- E-Education
- Telemedicine
- E-Governance
- Entertainment.

ICT experience to rural masses includes these and others such as video conferencing and surveillance. He gave an example of cloth sales that have been significantly boosted by ICT in Ghana.

Mr Patel then spoke on:-

1. Basic requirement for rural application technologies:- Low cost of implementation and operation, ease of installation and maintenance where qualified technical personnel are scarce, possibility of implementation where basic infrastructure is absent.
2. Technology options available:- Solar, Fibre-to-Cabinet, Fibre-to-Home, Satellite, Wireless.

He gave examples of technology options in rural India, e.g using solar technology, solar-powered p.cs, and also made comparison of rural VAST solutions.

He spoke again of creating a social enterprise through public-private partnership.

To end day 1 of the forum, Dr Edozien emphasized what we want to achieve at the forum, e.g ownership of ICT at community level, looking at the potential of specific projects, and financing ICT.

Mr Fayomi of USPF in his closing remarks appreciated the participation of the audience, and then closing prayers were said.

DAY 2 (FEBRUARY 19 2010)

After the introduction to day 2 by the compere, Elvon Jarrett and Feranmi Babalola (Summarizing in Yoruba), Dr Edozien of G.B.F said members of the forum should be concerned with what their needs are and how to articulate them. She then called for suggestions.

SUGGESTION.

The government should take ICT seriously in the same way as agriculture, considering its current global importance. Access to capital for ICT-related projects should be made available at low interest rates.

In the first presentation of the day, Mr Patel of C.T.O spoke next on the ICT model of connectivity, Access/ Content, Users, and asked, 'How do we make funds available to communities in rural areas?'. He said, from experience, governments are not too interested in funding telecommunications and ICT per se while being generally enthusiastic in

respect of socio-economic development. He said to attain MDGs of minimizing poverty and achieving gender-equality, ICT must be leveraged.

Mr Patel spoke of development challenges in rural areas and said solutions must be doable, sustainable, replicable, scalable, and should add value.

In considering lessons for financing and funding, he stated that plenty of investment was coming into Africa, e.g from countries like China, India, Brazil and from the Middle East, and that there was high profitability in Africa, but underinvestment in ICT. He also referred to factors undermining investor-confidence.

He identified challenges in funding rural connectivity as:-

- High fixed capital costs
- Low return on investment
- Difficulty in attracting investment to rural areas.

He also spoke on the need for USPF to subsidise service providers, the need for cheaper technologies, and of the need to balance the technology that best fits the community.

He said that the Grameen model of financing in Bangladesh could be adopted in Nigeria, and identified various sources of funds:-

- ❖ African governments through ministries and public banks
- ❖ Bilateral agencies e.g DFID, USAID, SIDA

- ❖ Other emerging markets.
- ❖ Multilateral banks and agencies e.g IDA, IFC, WB, ADB
- ❖ Private equity, Investors
- ❖ Venture capitalists/Business angels
- ❖ Structured funds
- ❖ Commercial banks.
- ❖ Investment/ Merchant banks.
- ❖ Vendor financing.
- ❖ New sources:- rural banks, microfinance

Government Funding

Multilateral developments partners, e.g W.B

IFC investment in Commonwealth Africa

The African regional Communication Infrastructure Programme(RCIP).

Dr Edozien spoke next on our wanting to be empowered and to carry the learning to our communities. She wondered:-

1. How do we train the trainers?
2. How can we train 10 million people nationwide in ICT?

She called for suggestions on moving ICT forward, saying the forum should consider what additional projects USPF can do, and also look at the role of youth and rural women.

SUGGESTIONS/ QUESTIONS

- ❖ There should be provision of strategic locations and connectivity to train rural women in ICT
- ❖ Cooperative unions have had a structure in place since 1953 that can be harnessed for training the trainers(ii) USPF and GBF should help cooperative unions in respect of ICT needs.
- ❖ ICT should be exploited for selling farm products.
- ❖ Youth should be trained on solar energy.
- ❖ NUT representative:- Teaches exist to reach the grassroots; partnership is possible.
- ❖ NGOs can be trained, and have the potential to reach the youth and grassroots.
- ❖ How can USPF help with training NASSI members?
- ❖ The special peculiarities of physically challenged persons should be considered in respect of ICT training. They should constitute 10% of those trained since this is their proportion in the nation.
- ❖ What is the time-frame to achieve target of training the targeted number of people? (Answer: - 12 months).

Dr Edozien said this proposition needs to be properly worked out.

- ❖ USPF should support women in business in respect of training.

- ❖ (a) Establishment of C.C.Cs at each Local Government Headquarters for ICT training.
 - (b) Security and ownership of ICT centres:- Community Development and centres can be involved.
 - (c) How feasible is telemedicine in rural parts of Nigeria?
 - (d) Participants should be given laptops and can then train others!
- ❖ How can ICT be leveraged for growing our agro-businesses? (Engr Wakil of USPF commented, saying U.S.P.F has programmes for e-library, e-agric and e-health).

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS/COMMENTS/ QUESTIONS.

- ❖ How can the Solid Minerals Association be helped with ICT?
- ❖ Traditional societies and unions should be factored into ICT training.
- ❖ KOMU (A border town) is ready to partner with USPF.
- ❖ A participant from Ijero Local Government in Ekiti state put forward a financial proposition to partner with USPF.
- ❖ What programmes does USPF have for children?
- ❖ USPF should assist in respect of solar-powered projects.
- ❖ There should be an information database for graduates.
- ❖ What can be done to avoid a situation where beneficiaries of training refuse to train others?

(ANSWER: Each group has a responsibility to select credible candidates for training).

ROUNDING UP

Mr Patel of C.T.O said with the establishment of Community Communication Centres, there must be the desire to learn in the communities and to train our families. The road is not easy, but the first step has been taken.

Dr Edozien summarized what had been achieved:-

- **Training workshops:-** The USPF secretary is making a commitment to do something about this.
- **The need to conceive what we wish to achieve with ICT.**
- **Partnership Potential:-** Follow up is definite.
- **Microfinance and Capital:-** A commitment from the USPF secretary to look into this.
- **Market Linkages:-** ICTs to help us with websites, databases and price information.
- **Connectivity:-** A pledge by Etisalat to cover Komu.
- **Nomination of representatives.**
- **Pledge to train 10 million people nation-wide (1.6 million in the South West) over a 12-month period.**
- **One C.C. Centre per local government area is an objective.**

- **Feasible proposals from participants for community owned projects.**

THE WAY FORWARD

Mr Emeka Orji (Managing Director, GBF) spoke on the need to being structuring after this meeting. He also said:-

1. GBF should be communicating to participants and vice-versa.
2. USPF is waiting for well-articulated and sustainable business projects and cases.

CLOSING REMARKS

1. Alhaji Gbadamosi (Director of cooperative services, Oyo state) thanked Chief Makinde and the organsiers of the forum for the enlightenment received.
2. Engr Adegun (USPF board member) thanked all the participanats for their presence, and for the contributions, pointing out the good fortune of the South West in being the first beneficiary of the programme.
3. Mr Adedigba of USPF spoke briefly to participants on:-
 - The need to be business-oriented.
 - The need to strategies and structure.

- Partnering with a supportive partner in USPF.
- The need to go back and to share what has been learnt.

The forum official ended with closing prayers.